

Dealing with data from West Nilotic languages

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Building on collaborative work with Cedric Macmartin, Otto Gwado Ayoker, Bob Ladd, and Angela Impey.



A parallel?

“To consult the statistician after an experiment is finished is often merely to ask him to conduct a post mortem examination. He can perhaps say what the experiment died of.”

[Fisher 1938]

The West Nilotic languages

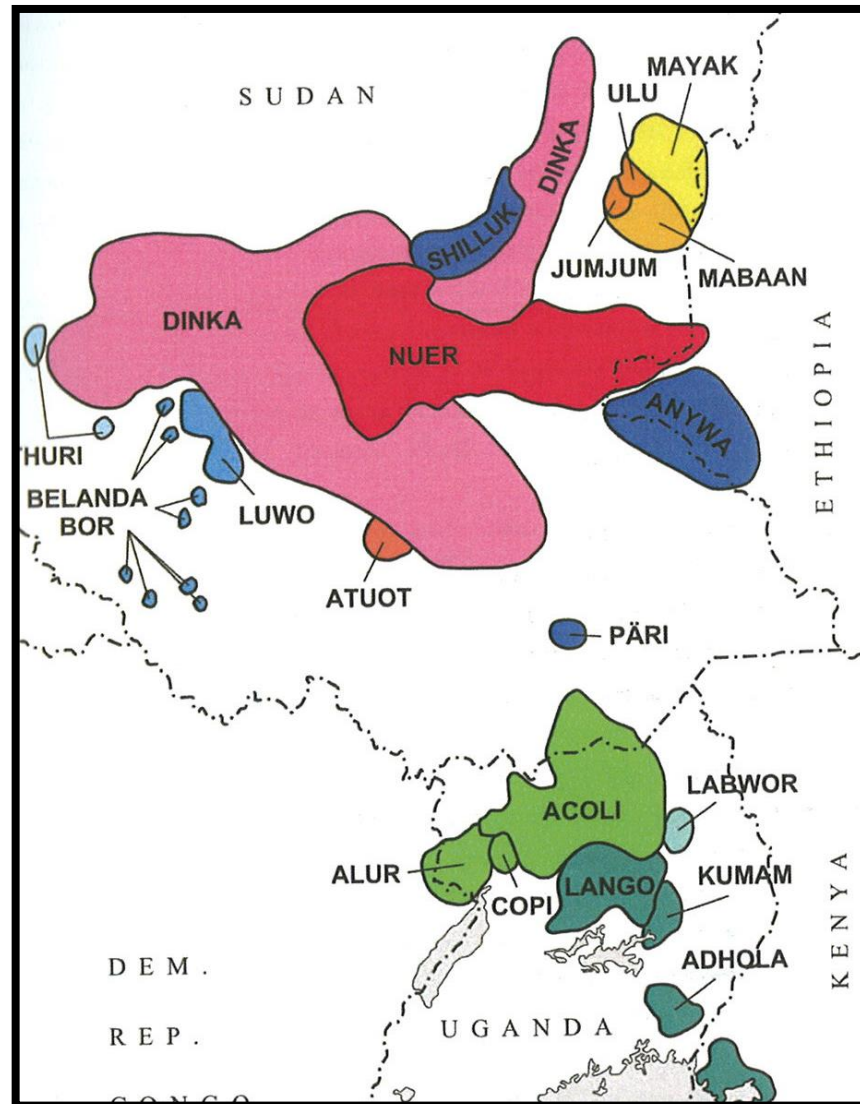


Figure from Storch (2005)

Example of a suprasegmental contrast: three-level vowel length

Short (V)

ràaan a-lèl

‘You isolate a person.’

person:S AG:S-isolate:2S

Long (VV)

ràaan a-lèel

‘He isolates a person.’

person:S AG.S-isolate:3S

Overlong (VVV)

ràaan a-lèeel

‘He provokes a person.’

person: S AGR:S-provoke:3S

Sounds are embedded; move mouse over transcriptions above and then click to play.

Example of the outcome of an acoustic study

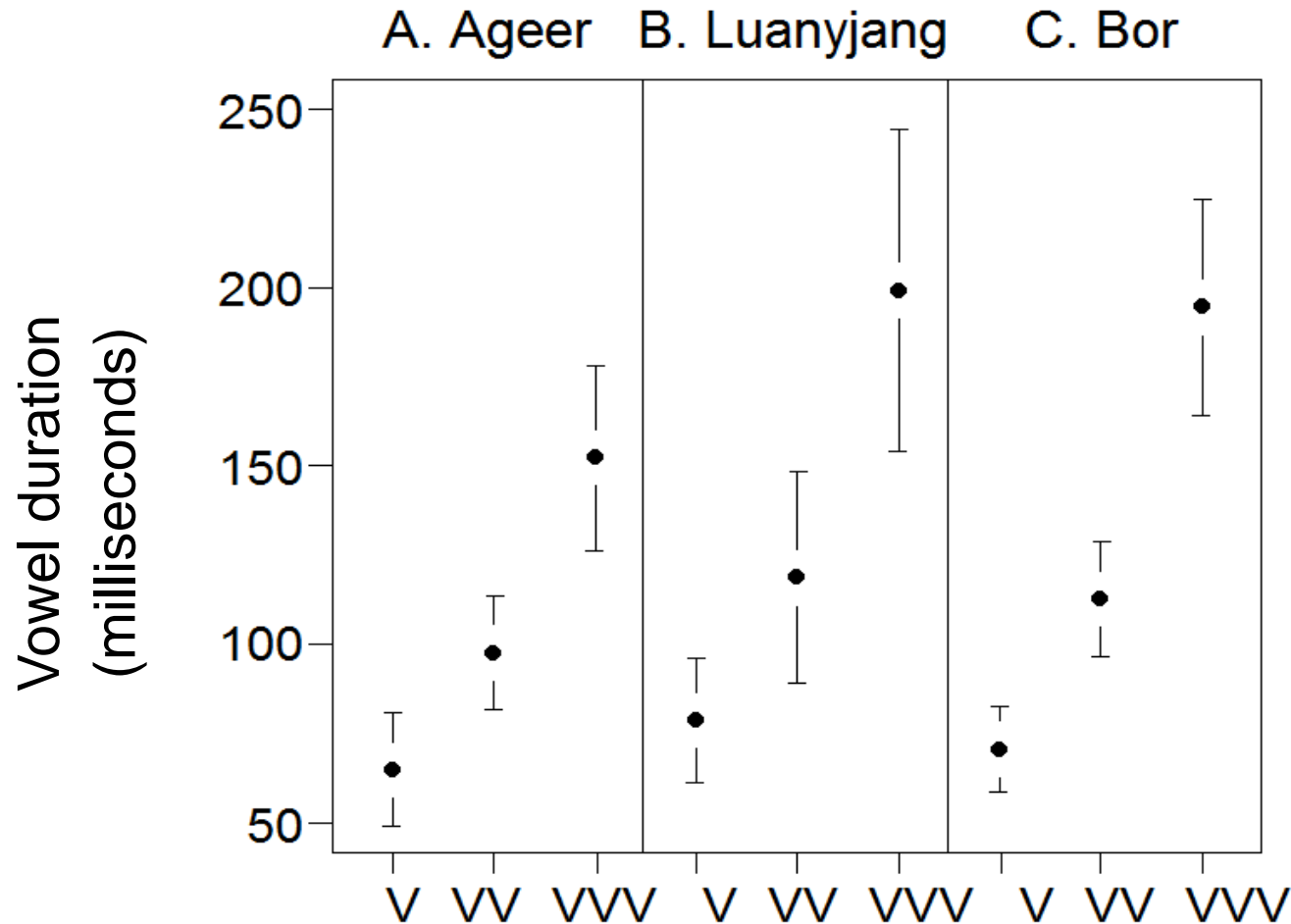


Figure – Means and standard deviations for short (V), long (VV) and overlong (VVV) vowels, in three Dinka dialects.

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